

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001078

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA AND PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2014

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR CONFIRMS IT WILL NOT PURSUE RESETTLEMENT OF  
IRAQI-PALESTINIANS FROM RUWEISHED REFUGEE CAMP

REF: A. 03 CAIRO 10867

[1](#)B. HILL/POLASCHIK E-MAIL 2/9/04

Classified By: DCM David Hale per 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: Contrary to statements made by UNHCR's regional mission in Cairo (ref a), UNHCR Jordan Representative Bronee confirmed that UNHCR currently does not plan to pursue resettlement of Iraqi-Palestinians outside the region. UNHCR would only consider third-country resettlement for the 345 Palestinians remaining in the Ruweished refugee camp after all other options have been exhausted, including a return to Iraq, a "return" to their country of origin or local integration in Jordan. Bronee told refcoord, "We are not at that point yet." UNHCR and the GOJ commented separately that a move by UNHCR to recognize Palestinians as refugees under the 1951 Convention would be viewed as a dramatic shift in global refugee policy and a conspiracy to solve the Palestinian refugee question outside a negotiated political solution. Given the many sensitivities surrounding Palestinian refugee policies, we recommend that the Department not consider this caseload for resettlement. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (U) In response to queries raised ref a and b, refcoord contacted UNHCR Jordan Representative Sten Bronee February 10 to clarify UNHCR plans to find a durable solution for the 345 Iraqi-Palestinians remaining in the Ruweished refugee camp. Bronee confirmed that UNHCR policy -- as presented to resettlement countries in a December 2003 briefing in Geneva -- is to consider third-country resettlement for Iraqi-Palestinians only after all other options have been exhausted. "We are not at that point yet," Bronee added. UNHCR is currently pursuing other durable solutions for this group, including return to Iraq, a "return" to the West Bank or Gaza and local integration in Jordan or other Arab countries. Bronee reported that UNHCR has just sent a second letter to the Israeli Ambassador in Geneva requesting that the GOI allow the 345 Iraqi-Palestinians to "return" to the West Bank and Gaza.

[1](#)3. (U) Bronee also confirmed that UNHCR has not recognized as Convention-definition refugees any of the 1,200 Iraqi-Palestinians who fled to Jordan between March and May 2004 and does not plan to conduct refugee status determination interviews for any Iraqi-Palestinians in Jordan. (The GOJ allowed 386 Iraqi-Palestinians with family ties to Jordan to reside permanently in Jordan, while nearly 500 other Iraqi-Palestinians have voluntarily returned to Iraq. 345 Iraqi-Palestinians remain in the UNHCR camp at Ruweished, Jordan.) UNHCR has registered the Iraqi-Palestinian population for assistance purposes only; under a long-standing agreement between UNHCR and UNRWA, UNHCR does not recognize Palestinians as refugees in UNRWA's areas of operations (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza). Bronee commented that any move by UNHCR to recognize Palestinian refugees under the 1951 Convention would create "political shock waves" in the region.

[1](#)4. (C) In a separate February 10 meeting, GOJ Department of Palestinian Affairs Director General Abdulkarim Abulhaija told refcoord that UNHCR recognition of Palestinian refugees in an UNRWA area of operation would be viewed as a dramatic shift in global refugee policy. Any U.S. resettlement of UNHCR-recognized Palestinian refugees would be interpreted as a conspiracy to solve the Palestinian refugee question outside the parameters of a negotiated political solution, with difficult political ramifications. Abulhaija predicted that any changes in existing Palestinian refugee policies would result in high-level condemnation from the Arab League. On the other hand, he added, quiet acceptance of Palestinians under U.S. and European immigration -- rather than refugee -- programs could prove to be an acceptable humanitarian solution for this caseload, provided the processing was handled in a low-key and case-by-case fashion. (UNHCR has given us a list of Iraqi-Palestinians with close family ties to the U.S. and we are preparing a response that outlines our immigrant visa requirements.)

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: Given the many sensitivities surrounding Palestinian refugee policies, we recommend that the Department not consider Iraqi-Palestinians for the U.S.

refugee resettlement program. We continue to work with UNHCR, the GOJ and other neighboring governments to find solutions for this group that do not include resettlement outside the region.

16. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.  
GNEHM